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A P P E A L, &c.

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OCT 21 1939

MORAL FEELINGS

OF

SAMUEL THORNTON ROWLAND
BORDON HAWKINS BROWN, Esq.

AND TO

EVERY MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF
COMMONS

WHO CONSCIENTIOUSLY SUPPORTS THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION

IN A LETTER TO

WILLIAM WIERFORCE, Esq.

There is no reason why this letter should not be read and
discussed in public, and the printer of this letter is not
responsible for any such use.

LONDON

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1939

[Price One Shilling]

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A N
A P P E A L
TO THE
M O R A L F E E L I N G S
O F
S A M U E L T H O R N T O N , R O W L A N D
B U R D O N , H A W K I N S B R O W N , *Esqrs.*
A N D T O
E V E R Y M E M B E R O F T H E H O U S E O F
C O M M O N S
W H O C O N S C I E N T I O U S L Y S U P P O R T S T H E P R E S E N T A D M I -
N I S T R A T I O N .
I N A L E T T E R T O
W I L L I A M W I L B E R F O R C E , *Esq.*

There is no reliance upon that steady persevering virtue which true
patriotism requires, where the principles of religion and of public spirit
are not inseparably united. J E B B , S E R M .

L O N D O N :
Printed for J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

1797.

[Price One Shilling.]

L E T T E R

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, Esq.

SIR,

I who is capable of reflection, and not destitute of feeling, to contemplate the present awful state of his country, without attempting to avert the danger by which it is threatened.

In taking the liberty of addressing you, I think it necessary to premise, that being totally unconnected with any party, I am not actuated by motives of that description: that I am not prejudiced in favour of any political character, but

LETTER

TO

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, Esq.

SIR,

IT is impossible for any impartial Englishman, who is capable of reflection, and not destitute of feeling, to contemplate the present awful state of his country, without attempting to avert the danger by which it is threatened.

In taking the liberty of addressing you, I think it necessary to premise, that being totally unconnected with any party, I am not actuated by motives of that description: that I am not prejudiced in favour of any political character, but

am attached to the firm and inviolable principles, on which was reared the Noble Fabric of the British Constitution.

I avow myself to be a free-born Briton of the *old* School, and apprehend as much danger to the liberties of my country from the uncontrouled dominion of an imperious Aristocracy, as there might be anarchy and tumult in the establishment of an unqualified Democracy. The venerable constitution of this land was wont to ride securely at anchor between these two extremes; but now the steerage appears to be changing: and the substantial reasons which follow will not permit me to hope that the change can be in our favour.

1st. Although I have most religiously endeavoured to perform my duty to God and to Society, and have hitherto rendered unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; yet do I perceive my civil rights, which are entrusted to your guardianship, most alarmingly abridged.

2^{dly}. Although neither pestilence nor famine has scourged this once favoured kingdom, and the
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the seasons have yielded their abundance with little diminution of their accustomed bounty, yet are taxes multiplying so rapidly, and the necessities of life so enormously increasing in value, that the fruits of my industry, of which it is your specific duty to insure me the possession, are sensibly melting away. The comforts with which diligence and œconomy formerly rewarded persons of my station now no longer cheer the hearts of a tender, an affectionate, and virtuous family.

But besides these personal causes of complaint, though the taxes in support of the poor are extremely burthensome and oppressive, I am doomed to witness daily increasing scenes of wretchedness, which, painful as they are to behold, it is still more so to be deprived of the power to relieve.

These are real and serious grievances, Sir, which none but the very wealthy, the very unfeeling, and the very careless can fail to observe. Mr. P. may preface the opening of each budget with an eloquent statement of national prosperity,

rity, but he may be contradicted with truth, from the decided and galling experience of a numerous, and I will presume to add, a most respectable part of the community—a class of people, insulted and disregarded as they are in the present times, who contribute much more than the possessor of extreme wealth, or the heritors of extreme poverty, to the stability, the dignity and the virtue of every empire, where they are permitted to flourish.

In these days of political acrimony and dark suspicion, party spirit is become so rancorous, and Ministers, though possessing only a delegated power, are become so jealous of their authority, and have taken such new and extraordinary precautions to stifle complaint, that it is hardly safe for the most moderate and peaceable subject of this realm to state his own grievances, or express his fears for his country's welfare, should his ideas of the measures of Administration vary or differ from those of its supporters.

But I am yet sanguine enough to hope, that one avenue remains unclosed, through which the aggrieved

aggrieved may still securely seek redress—that is, by a direct appeal to your *moral feelings*, to the reason, the humanity, the conscience of yourself and every other member of the House of Commons, whose private character remains untainted, who is exemplary in his domestic relations, and who is an independent man. Upon this evidence of your private worth, and from your open profession, I conclude that you are a Christian. You well know, Sir, that the most extensive and beneficent principle of Christianity is, that “you should do to others as you would that they should do to you.” Upon this sacred and immoveable basis rests the doctrine, that moral obligations are reciprocal, and equally binding upon every order in society. Moral duties being mutual, there cannot be one species of justice or good faith, &c. for the governors of a nation, and another for the governed. The mere supposition that the Divine Being does not require the same obedience to his laws from every member of the community, were it generally acted upon, must lead to the subversion of all order and good government. For if there are really *no* divine laws by which the actions of
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men must *in all cases* be *indispensably* regulated, upon what ground are obedience, submission and allegiance exacted by our superiors? Clear and intelligible as this reasoning is in itself, it is still farther confirmed by historical testimony, which undeniably proves that nations fall to inevitable decay, when morals have declined, and corruption and depravity prevail to a certain degree.

Reason and experience then alike concur in establishing this everlasting *truth*, that genuine morality is *essential* not only to the stability but to the very existence of nations. It is the more necessary to keep this great axiom ever in view, because a contrary position, drawn, I fear, not from just premises, but from the too ordinary practice of statesmen, has been very generally maintained, viz. that moral obligation may be dispensed with when the *necessity* of a state requires it.

Such being the direct influence of morality on the prosperity of nations, if a more strict observance of its injunctions were required from one class of persons than another, it would be from
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that class in which deviations from rectitude produce in society the greatest quantity of disorder and misery. Hence I may justly infer, that the duties of statesmen and legislators are of the highest and most awful cast.

The debauchee or the drunkard, pernicious as is his conduct, injures himself or his family chiefly, and his example extends comparatively to a very small distance in weakening the bonds of society, but the mischief of political profligacy is still more widely diffused—it involves in it the fate of millions—it overwhelms whole empires with woe and devastation.

It may seem unnecessary to have dwelt so long upon the magnitude and reality of legislative duties, in an address to you, Sir, or to gentlemen of your character. But when I compare the measures of the Administration which you support either with the precepts of Christ, or the rules of morality, I feel myself forcibly urged to make an appeal to your *conscience*, and most solemnly to call upon you at this momentous period to explain, how you reconcile such measures

tures with any one religious principle? If you cannot, then I conjure you in the name of God, and of your country, to return without delay to the execution of that trust, to the sacred and indispensable nature of which I have endeavoured to draw your most serious attention.

You must be conscious Sir, that in supporting Mr. P. and acting with his party, you yourself are implicated in the good or evil tendency of his measures. No Minister can, *constitutionally* at least, execute any of his designs, of whatever complexion, without the concurrence of a majority of the House of Commons. Every individual of this majority is as responsible in foro conscientiae for every *vote*, as the Premier himself is amenable for every public *act*, to the Bar of the Nation and to the Tribunal of God.

Weigh well the rigid nature and deep import of this your senatorial responsibility. Reflect, Sir, how strictly and individually answerable you are for the dreadful consequences which every *vote* of yours may have produced throughout England and Europe. But more especially, for
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the deplorable effects which two grand decisions of yours relating to Parliamentary Reform, and the present War with France have had upon the national virtue, the social order, and the internal tranquility of this kingdom.

First, I shall request your permission to inquire into the consequences which your opposition to a Reform of Parliament has produced upon the morals, and of course upon the security, the domestic peace, and the prosperity of this once favoured island.

If there ever was a question proposed to your House of a more strictly virtuous and moral tendency than another, it was that of Parliamentary Reform. If there ever was a measure calculated to stem the tide of corruption, to restore correctness and purity to public manners, to secure the liberties of Englishmen, to give permanency, stability, energy, and safety to the unadulterated Constitution of Great Britain—this was that measure. Its very rejection was a proof of its necessity. How any man of moral feelings and sound sense could join in such a rejection,

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on the flimsy plea of unseasonableness, will be matter of equal astonishment and regret to the latest posterity. There was *no* time in which it ought not to have been adopted, but the most early was undoubtedly the most seasonable. In the year 1784, you allowed, and you decided that corruption was increasing and ought to be diminished :—it was *then* an alarming evil. But in the year 1796, when it was multiplied an hundred fold, you considered it as the least of two evils.

Your dread of anarchy and sedition overcame your juster alarms for the safety of religion and liberty. Avowed political profligacy was permitted to extend its devastations, unimpeded by you—because that was not the precise moment in which it could with safety be checked. Would you apply this sort of treatment to a contagious, wide wasting pestilence? Would you wait till some unusual change in the atmosphere should stay the ravages of that distemper, after thousands had fallen victims to its malignity? Would you not on the contrary, without hesitation or delay, and even at some personal risk, cut off

off all communication between those who were tainted and those who were sound?

But that *Anarchy* which you now conceive to be the greatest evil, takes its rise from the corruption, which you think comparatively innocent. For if the morality of a nation is inseparably connected with its internal prosperity and peace—in opposing Reform, Mr. P. and you his adherent, are practically opposing this incontrovertible maxim. You are contributing in a most rapid and extensive manner to vitiate the minds of the people—to destroy the harmony of society—to lay the foundation for Anarchy, where alone it can be founded, viz. in a depravity of morals.

I must once more appeal to historical testimony, when I maintain, that no principles, purely political, and which solely affect the *form* of any Government, have ever, unaided by oppression, excited a people to acts of sedition and treason. When by harsh and despotic treatment a nation is forced to revolt, (for a general revolt has seldom or ever happened among a
prosperous

prosperous and happy people) the horrors and excesses too frequently attending revolution, originate in the moral corruption of the multitude, previously and gradually acquired, from the influence of evil example. A profligate and uninstructed man, in an half civilized state, where his wants are multiplied by art, and his envy roused by comparison, is one of the most terrible and savage animals of the whole creation. He is not engendered under any particular *form of Government*, but will constantly be found to exist in every community where ignorance and vice are allowed to prevail, and will be multiplied in proportion as these enemies to human happiness are patronized and cherished. Persons of this description are the true producers and supporters of Anarchy, whether they assume the name of Royalist or Democrat. These are the men who ought to excite your most serious alarm, and rouse your most zealous opposition.

It is however more than probable, that your fatal decision against Reform, has tended to increase, rather than diminish these terrible foes

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to social order and regular government. This fact will, I fear, be too plainly ascertained in the course of the subsequent enquiry into the tendency of those Abuses, whose actual existence is indelibly stamped in the Journals of your House, in these decisive terms: "The Influence of the Crown had increased, was increasing, and ought to be diminished."

With the ardent, but delusive hope that you would practically adhere to, and effectuate this noble resolution of the Commons, were you, Sir, ushered into political notice. The Premier himself owed the earliest and best part of his popular elevation to his solemn profession of the same sacred principles, which produced this ever memorable resolution.

But Mr. P's morality and his ambition *then* went *hand in hand*. The path which he had to pursue was rugged indeed, and steep; but it was direct: it would have conducted him, at one and the same time, to the chief seat of national honour, and to the pinnacle of moral and political perfection. His noblest ambition, his most

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aspiring

aspiring hopes might have been completely gratified. He would have been the saviour of his country.—Alas! Lucifer, Son of the Morning, how art thou fallen! Yes, Sir, even he was subdued—by that unseen, irresistible power, that influence, before which the proudest statesmen have fallen prostrate.

For before the defection of Mr. P. that disgraceful axiom, which has debased the British character, and sunk the name of Briton to the lowest degree of ignominy—that axiom, that every man has his price, was received without a blush, and acted upon in defiance of laws divine or human. His price was the gratification of a false and imperious ambition: he had not the magnanimity, the virtue to decline a station, which, at his age, the sublimest genius could not have filled with honour to himself, or safety to his country. A station, Sir, which demands a maturity of judgment, a weight of experience, and a stern degree of integrity, which it was impossible for him to have acquired.*

Even

* If Mr. P. was sincere in his support of Parliamentary Reform, and if he entered into office with a view to obtain one,

Even supposing that Mr. P. in accepting a place of the highest trust, was actuated by the purest motives; that the mode of his ascension to that place was not unconstitutional; that he has performed the functions of his high office with a wisdom above his years; yet HAS HE RETAINED HIS INTEGRITY?—Has he, or has he not violated one of the most sacred obligations which a man could enter into, by increasing to a tremendous magnitude that influence which he had solemnly pledged himself to diminish; that influence which the Legislature had marked with an indelible stigma; that influence which, in its application, constitutes a high crime and misdemeanor against the most merciful commandment of God.

This influence, Sir, is in its practice, so intimately, so artfully interwoven with the alledged

one, his duty and his true interest would have directed him to resign, the instant he found that his patriotic and virtuous schemes could not be executed. He knew enough of the practice of the British Government and energy of the nation to have insured his return to the same high station, in due season, and with tenfold effect.

and specious necessities of the state, that its real insidious character has not been suspected, and therefore has not been regarded with that watchful jealousy, which you as a representative ought to have exercised.

Influence is a soft and courtly appellation, but what is its drift and meaning? It is in fact nothing less than another name for *seduction*.* A crime of no ordinary hue; a crime, against which this awful denunciation has been delivered.—“ It is necessary that offences should come, but woe be to that man by whom the offence cometh.” Our kind Creator has solicitously warned us to shun temptation; and in our daily petitions to him, has enjoined us to seek his protection against its ever dangerous approach.

How heinous then is that transgression which daringly breaks down this sacred barrier, which God himself has raised to shield the weakness of

* Every means of tainting human rectitude, every effort to tempt a man to transgress any of his duties to God or to Society is Seduction.

the human heart, and directly attacks its most unguarded recesses?

Such and so foul is the crime of tempting men, under the guileful mask of influence, to betray the dearest interests of their country; to desert their most sacred principles; to abandon that truly exalted virtue Patriotism; and sink that palladium of civilized nations, Political Integrity, to the lowest point of contempt!

Need I appeal to the numerous instances of its baneful application among the highest ranks of the community? No, Sir, these are too recent, too notorious, and too humiliating. It is impossible that facts so glaring can have escaped your observation, although the frequency of them may have familiarised dereliction of principle even to your mind, and lessened in your estimation the magnitude of that guilt, which is invariably attached to the man who sells the virtue, the happiness, and the freedom of his country, for a title, a place, a ribbon, or a pension. Guilty indeed that man is—but how much more guilty is he who presents the temptation? Can

you be innocent who furnish the means of seduction? You, Sir, who have it always in your power to dry up the source from whence corruption flows, and have not done it? I have brought the matter home to your own breast, that the criminality of exercising this influence, which is now so lightly estimated, may appear before you in all its horror. Yes, Sir—Here is a sort of Treason, shall I call it? which is truly terrific—This it is which insensibly saps the foundations of civil society—This it is which like a rank and subtle poison relaxes the sinews, and at length totally dissolves the bonds of social union—This it is which taints the very fountain of national security, works upon the weakest parts of human nature, and becomes every hour more dreadful in its consequences, in proportion to the number of its victims and the increasing facility of its triumphs.

But the criminality of tempting men from the paths of rectitude is not confined to the rich and great. Corruption among them assumes greater degrees of refinement. Its hostility to the liberties of the subject is more concealed, and its annihilation

annihilation of principle less suspected—but among the poorer classes seduction is practised in the most undisguised manner, and here it appears in all its native deformity.

The poorer classes of this kingdom have not only to contend against the contagion of evil example, which is sufficiently pernicious and extensive, but they are also seduced from their duty by every species of temptation, under every possible form in which their virtue can be assailed; and what is still more to be lamented, by that very class of their superiors who ought to be alike the guardians of their *morals*, as they are appointed to protect their liberty and property.

It is plain that I allude to the *mode* of electing Members of Parliament: and surely none can be better calculated to engender and cherish profligacy than the usual conduct of an election.

The existing laws against bribery and corruption are a complete proof of this mode of corrupting popular manners. But the direct offer of a pecuniary bribe had become so inconvenient to the Members themselves, as to give rise to

certain laws which have lessened the open practice of it; yet even now upon these occasions the people are encouraged to commit every species of excess. Instead of being instructed in the nature and importance of choosing an able and virtuous trustee, this most sacred and valuable privilege of an Englishman is connected with the grossest immoralities. But keeping electors in a state of riot and intoxication, or bribing them not to vote for the man whom their judgment approves, or threatening them with the candidate's displeasure on the same account, are only low degrees of trespass in the scale of morality, compared with *perjury*, the deepest of all transgressions against the well-being of a state. Here, Sir, I must entreat you to pause, and seriously reflect on the nature of an *oath*, as the surest mean of enforcing subordination, and as the grand preservative of every thing dear and estimable to man in his social capacity. It is the most solemn, it is the final appeal to the Almighty for the truth of what we assert. It is the most inviolable bond which knits society together. Ought it not then to be kept in the most awful reserve? Should not every inducement

ment to break it be made as difficult and placed as remote as possible? And yet, Sir, how shocking must it be to your religious sensations, when you reflect how lightly, how familiarly this high appeal to God is daily and hourly repeated in the most ordinary commercial transactions with one department of the state? Are you not struck with horror at the effect which the multiplicity of oaths enjoined by the present Financier must have in weakening their influence, and enfeebling their sanction? But on no occasion is a more frightful disregard paid to this most solemn of all obligations than at a contested election. There, Sir, men who profess Christianity, or who at least acknowledge the existence of a Deity by appealing to him, are not ashamed of tempting their fellow-creatures to insult him by *perjury*! Ignorant and debased as the poorer classes are said to be, what can more effectually bring into contempt with them all religious motives, all virtuous incentives to order and obedience, than these flagrant breaches of the Divine commands? You are afraid of anarchy, sedition and treason—can there be a wider or more dreadful inlet to anarchy than such

such transactions? Are these the acts which even our most upright senators, by conniving at, sanction and support? Is this your mode of defending the British Constitution—by tainting the purity of representation and corrupting the integrity of Britons?

Of what materials do you imagine the human mind is composed? Can it bear to be debased and degraded to the lowest pitch of turpitude, by bribery, by debauchery, by perjury, to serve one purpose? Shall loyalty, obedience to God and to the laws be required of the same mind, when another intention is to be answered? No, Sir, human nature is not thus constituted. If mankind are corrupted, their actions will correspond with their motives. If religious sanctions are weakened or destroyed, self-interest and passion will succeed to them. Upon such minds no law which can be evaded will be observed. Acts of Parliament against bribery and corruption may be multiplied without end; the evil will not be eradicated, until all temptation is removed by a total but an easy change in the *mode* of electing. A Reform of Parliament would peaceably and constitutionally effect a change in
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this essential point, as well as that which regards the number and qualifications of the elected. I think I have said enough of corrupt influence to convince you of its alarming prevalence—its deep criminality, of its direct tendency to hasten the arrival and increase the horrors of that anarchy, which every good man deprecates as strongly as yourself.

When we reflect upon the wonted influence which the sincere adoption of moral principles has upon the minds and conduct of men, it may appear wonderful, that you should apparently act diametrically opposite to such principles. But I can easily apologise for you, when I know that your whole attention has been artfully attracted and assiduously rivetted to the astonishing scenes which France has lately exhibited. It is now, however, high time for you to withdraw your attention from the internal transactions of France, and to turn your thoughts to the impending calamity of England; to divest your mind of imaginary terrors and speculative dangers, and instantly begin to retrieve, if you can, the *substantial* evils which you have had a personal share in producing

producing in your *own* country. Imperious duty commands you to compensate errors, which I sincerely believe to have been *unconsciously* committed. For in the heat of party contests, under the immediate impression of terror suddenly excited and insidiously kept alive, the most enlightened understanding may have been biassed and deluded, and even the moral perceptions of upright men may thus have been blunted: under such influence they may have betrayed too eager an attachment to property, and in their tremulous anxiety to preserve *themselves*, may have sacrificed the dearest interests, and hazarded the very existence of their *country*. I have put this candid construction on your past motives and action—But I now make a most solemn appeal to your moral feelings, whether you can conscientiously persevere in supporting a system, which I have shewn to be decidedly hostile to the morality which is inseparably connected with national security.

The next important decision of yours in favour of a war with France I shall now take the liberty to investigate.

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Whether the war was necessary or just, is not the question before us. I am only to enquire whether the principles upon which it was secretly founded and has been openly conducted are such as you who are a good man and renowned for humanity, a Christian and an English Senator, can consistently vindicate or conscientiously approve?

Supposing what many assert to be true, that occasional wars are the inevitable lot of the human race: it would be no unreasonable idea to entertain, that as nations advanced in civilization, some humane plan for lessening the horrors of ordinary warfare might be adopted; and the union of mercy with justice in the application of this terrible scourge to mankind, might soften its severity. Still more have we a right to expect, that a war in support of justice, in behalf of all order, all religion, all government, by a nation famous for its humanity, and the superior purity of its Christian profession, should be conducted upon the most rigid principles of justice, and tempered by the mildest influences of humanity. Alas, Sir, how different a procedure

has

has the British Ministry exhibited to surrounding nations?

Waving the question of the right which you have to interfere with the sort of government, which foreign nations choose to adopt for themselves; permit me to ask you upon what principle of equity, of honour, or of good faith—upon what ground of religion or reason you became accessories to a partition of French territory, when your declared object was to restore the French King to the plenitude of his ancient power, and dispense to the French people order and tranquility? You will find it difficult to reconcile the iniquity heightened by dissimulation thus practised by your most intimate political friends, with any law divine or human hitherto promulgated to mankind. I will do you the justice to believe that you were not privy to this nefarious plan of the confederacy. The fact is however now notorious to you and to the world, and with such a specimen before you, it would be impertinent in me to point out the path which duty loudly commands you now to pursue.*

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* No person can doubt of the intentions of the coalesced powers,

The partition of French territory being frustrated by the chances of war; a most infernal plan, new and unequalled in the annals of the universe, was next projected—a plan too atrocious for language to reprobate in terms sufficiently forcible—Human nature herself sickens at the bare idea of a scheme, which had for its object the reduction of twenty-six millions of human beings by famine. The British nation has ever been accustomed to wage war with magnanimity as well as courage—but this was to have committed to a painful, lingering and horrid death, millions of the innocent, the helpless, the aged

powers, since their actions have developed these in the most decisive manner. To the wickedness of their principles the resentful instigator and inveterate supporter of the war bears strong testimony in these emphatic terms: “THE PRINCES OF EUROPE (says Mr. Burke) WERE EASILY LED TO CONSIDER THE FLAMES THAT WERE CONSUMING FRANCE, NOT AS A WARNING TO PROTECT THEIR OWN BUILDINGS, BUT AS A HAPPY OCCASION FOR PILLAGING THE GOODS, AND FOR CARRYING OFF THE MATERIALS OF THEIR NEIGHBOUR’S HOUSE. THERE COULD BE NO TIE OF HONOUR IN A SOCIETY FOR PILLAGE.”

aged and the infirm. This was to have spread wide wasting calamity in its most hideous forms over myriads of unoffending creatures, and to have introduced an incalculable mass of misery chiefly and principally among those who have the strongest claims to the protection and tenderness of their fellow creatures. It is impossible to present to your imagination a more heart-rending picture than that of a whole nation sinking under the united horrors of pestilence and famine, the inseparable concomitants of each other, and committed without the possibility of relief to one of the most barbarous modes of dissolution which humanity can suffer. I blush to ask you, Sir, whether you have had any share in such an enterprise. Just and eternal God! where is the boasted humanity of Englishmen? Where sleeps the pride, the honour of the nation? Where slumbers its justice? that the inventor of a crime so enormous should not instantly receive the reward of his guilt. The bloody relentless tyrant who sacrificed such numbers of his countrymen on the groaning scaffolds of France was an angel of mercy compared with that wretch, who conceived the idea of consigning

ing twenty-six millions of people to be gradually *famished to death*. Could the benevolent advocate for African emancipation suffer the execution of such a scheme to be attempted, without testifying his marked and public abhorrence!—My pen refuses to reply—and every idea I had formed of humanity, piety and truth, are obscured and confounded.

The pious attempt to consign the whole French nation to the horrors of famine having totally failed, the flames of civil war were more successfully kindled, and fed with English gold, and kept up with unabating fury, until they were extinguished by the moderation and energy of the French republic. How strongly soever this abominable practice of adding fuel to the flames of civil discord may be vindicated by those, who draw their precedents from the barbarous war stratagems of rude and savage nations; and however such reasoning may appear convincing from the mouth of a noble Peer, and pass unreprieved from the venerable Bench of Christian Bishops, this does not lessen the cruelty or mitigate the heinousness of such offences, when committed

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by a people who are defending the cause of justice and humanity.

Another instance of immorality no less heinous than the former ones, was that of employing persons to forge French Assignats. Here, Sir, allow me to remark, that it is not a little extraordinary that the zealous supporters of order and regular government should sanction and abett a practice calculated to dissolve the cement of all society, and to produce an anarchy more terrible than any that has yet existed*.

Start

* Had not the fact itself been recorded in a court of justice, who could have believed that men who are frequently indirectly comparing their own honour and good faith with Gallic perfidy, who are appointing days of humiliation and fasting, while they tax their enemies with atheism and infidelity, should themselves abett the crime of forgery, than which there cannot be a grosser or more pernicious instance of *practical infidelity*. I say practical, because these very men have perpetually in their mouths religion, justice, order, &c. But the tree will ever be known by its fruit. Men are to be judged by their *actions*, and not their professions. It is impossible that the abettor of forgery, whether exercised on friend or foe, can either be a virtuous man, a good politician, or a real friend to his own country. For if, notwithstanding the full severity of the law has been allowed to take its course, with hardly one exception

Start you not at guilt like this, Sir? Can any man, who has the least particle of the moral sense remaining in his bosom, lay his hand upon his heart and justify himself to his God or to his country,

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exception by intervening mercy, the crime of forgery is still committed occasionally; with how much less restraint may it not be perpetrated in future, when it has received a sanction from the higher powers? The maxim "*An dolus an virtus quis in hoste requirit?*" is a relic of barbarism unworthy of a Christian country, or a nation complaining of the immorality and atrocities of its enemy. The object upon which a crime is committed does not change the nature of the crime, or lessen its guilt. But supposing that absolution could be given by the grave divines of the English church, who have never yet interfered as peace-makers in this bloody contest with France, was it political on our own account to favour a species of fraud which is punished with death, because it dissolves every social and moral tie? When the breach of a sacred law is countenanced by men who ought to set a better example, future culprits will not discriminate nicely on the particular case wherein that law was broken; it is sufficient for them that a precedent, however monstrous, has been established by their superiors; and the precedent of perfidiously forging assignats will be added by the historian's pen to the black catalogue of the moral deviations of the present ministry, which can never be erased by the most purifying vote of indemnity a confiding Parliament could give.

For proof of the forgery, see Cases at Nisi Prius, Strongitharm vers. Lukyn, where the consideration of a note was for payment for engraving plates upon which assignats were to be forged, &c. p. 389, by Isaac Espinasse.

country, after having contributed even by a whisper to the commission of enormities, the bare recital of which must shock the commonest feelings. Are these the modes of supporting the cause of religion, social order and justice? Does the Deity indeed require that desolation and death should be extended by famine over myriads of people, to atone for the wickedness of twenty thousand Jacobins? Are the tears and agonies of the mother unable to save her shrieking infant from the murderer's steel, her daughters from violation, her husband and her sons from a bloody death, and her cottage from the devouring flames, a grateful sacrifice to a benignant Deity, whose cause you profess to maintain?

Shocking as the facts are which I have brought to your recollection, they are recorded in bloody and indelible characters in the annals of Europe, and added to the mass of carnage and death under which thousands of your own countrymen have sunk, compose a frightful retrospect to that man's mind who has in the minutest instance aided and abetted their perpetra-

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tion. Whether he be a Christian or a friend to social morality, what wealth, what honours can sooth his remorse? What flattery, what human friendship heal his wounded conscience? What compensation can he offer to his country and to mankind?

It is to be lamented that a proper force for external resistance or internal defence of the kingdom cannot be raised, without a vast increase of the destructive influence I have already described, and without the most fatal violations of every moral principle among the poorer classes of the community from whence your strength is drawn. This deplorable evil, I fear, cannot be completely remedied. It ought, however, to become the subject of serious deliberation, by what means a mischief so pernicious to popular virtue, so dangerous to that self-preservation you are so anxiously inclined to guard, may be diminished. A more effectual mean of corruption cannot be practised, than that of converting sober industrious labourers of every description into soldiers. Your individual danger undoubtedly increases, in proportion as

this sort of conversion from peaceful and virtuous habits to those of a contrary character is extended; and under no administration has this perilous source of wickedness been so wantonly enlarged as under that of your friends. How have the very vitals of society been torn and mangled? How have the finely interwoven connexions, the nice dependencies of domestic life been cut up by the roots? What waste of public treasure, what perjury, what various species of villainy and rapacity have been exercised in effecting the enormous augmentation of martial force which these realms are now supporting.

To a mind open as yours is to conviction, and alive as it has ever shewn itself to religious and humane impressions, you could not have become a party to measures big with the evils I have described without feeling the keenest compunction, or being governed by a motive too imperious to be controuled by the ordinary obligations which bind the uncorrupted heart of man.

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This imperious motive was *terror*—which appears not only to have detached you from your obvious and indispensable *duties*, but has also rendered you blind to your distinct and real *interests*. Supposing your fear of anarchy and your dread of sedition to be founded in the most undoubted reality; could your security of life and property be increased, in proportion as the nation became more dissolute, more abandoned, more oppressed and more discontented? You must be conscious, Sir, that the very reverse of this is the truth, and from the facts which I have stated in the course of this letter, you must perceive, that you yourself have laid the only true foundation for your own fears and your own dangers, by rejecting the constitutional means intrusted to you of stemming the tide of corruption—by plunging with too great precipitation into a war, the horrors and the crimes of which have no parallel in the history of civilised nations.

Having abandoned that impregnable bulwark of your own and the kingdom's surest preservation, a peaceable Reform in Parliament, and having since then been totally absorbed in the

fearful contemplation of Democracy, you have been borne along with the tide, without daring to cast your eyes on the rocks and breakers towards which you were hastening; but having concurred in every measure of what tendency soever it might be, you have at length arrived in the harbour of military protection—dangerous and exposed as it is to the storms and tempests of corruption and vice, and shunned as it has ever been by the best friends of the British Constitution.

Alas, Sir, under the same fatal influence you have never reflected how much greater security there must have been to your life and property in the voluntary obedience and gratitude of a people, whose freedom and virtue you had cherished and improved, than in the best appointed and most numerous army in the world.

Would it not have been more Christian-like, more manly and more wise, to have tried lenient and soothing measures, ere you had so hastily appealed to coercion and to the sword. They could not have been less successful than
 2 those

those you have preferred, nor could the nation itself have been brought nearer to the edge of a precipice than it is at this moment. For what is the state of the nation now? You have silenced, or overawed, or confounded with the worst enemies of their country, the genuine and tried friends to the birthrights of Englishmen. You have established corruption as the corner-stone of the empire. You have deprived every reasonable and temperate mind of all political confidence in public men and public measures*. You have

* Many impartial and worthy persons, too much familiarised to the scandalous versatility of political character, exhibited during the present reign, have not conceived the defection of the Portland or Burkite party to be so unprincipled in itself, or so pernicious in its effects, as it really was. Had the Duke of P. Lord S——r, Lord L——gh, Mr. W——m, Mr. Burke, &c. accepted of no salaries, no gratuities, no pensions from a nation sinking under its pecuniary burthens, some credit might have been given for the *uprightness* of their motives, especially as it was under pretence of rallying round the Constitution that they departed from their avowed and solemn principles. They would then have acted an honourable and disinterested part, though their conduct could not have been deemed either wise, or manly, or consistent. Acting as they have done, it is impossible to justify them upon any constitutional ground; and it is no slight aggravation of their offence, that it is their second dereliction from the clear and evident interests of the public,

have not only increased the number of patient sufferers, who are not the less dissatisfied because they

public, whose guardianship they had assumed. Their fatal coalition with Lord North gave a more severe shock to public confidence, to political faith, and through these to the Constitution itself, than it had ever before experienced, and from which it has never recovered.

Formidable as was the phalanx composed of Lord North's and Mr. Burke's party, it was successfully opposed by Mr. Pitt, who was himself supported by the most extraordinary combination of parties ever formed in this kingdom, viz. that of the Friends to Reform, the India Direction, and the King's Friends. After several years most strenuous opposition to Mr. Pitt himself, and especially to the whole tenour and principles of his administration, which they asserted to be hostile to the Constitution, they have at length submitted to a second ignominious coalition with him, under the incredible pretence of *saving* this very Constitution.

Shameless and disgraceful plea! Has not this second dereliction of principle, more abandoned and more fatal than the first, given the death wound to that political confidence and popular attachment on which the stability of all governments so largely depends? Has it not laid a just foundation for that same distrust and discontent, of which these Gentlemen so loudly complain and are so much afraid? What triumph has it not afforded to the two equally to be dreaded adversaries of the Constitution—the Democrats and the defenders of Despotism?

Have not the trials for High Treason, and the zealous and loyal conduct of the inhabitants of the Irish and Welsh coasts, in repelling the French, proved to a demonstration, that the
 terrors

they bear their oppression in silence, but you have multiplied beyond your conception that half civilised, vitious, unprincipled species of animals which I have introduced to your notice. These are diffused over the whole community—They are of all parties and of all descriptions. You cannot be deceived as to the state of our finances, nor can you be ignorant of the skill, the vigilance, the courage, the enterprise, and the unfettered energies which your foreign enemy is capable of concentrating against you. I solemnly declare, that in representing what I believe to be the real state of my country, which I most cordially love, I mean no personal offence to you, nor have I the smallest inducement to
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terrors of the Burkites have been as groundless as the measures they have given rise to have been insulting and unjust to a patient, a brave, a faithful, but calumniated people? If these facts are so, who can vindicate the Burkites?

I have not included Mr. Fox, in my general censure of the Portland party. Although I am no partisan of his, I think that in common candour I ought to conclude, from the recent apostasy of the Burkites, as well as his own manly perseverance, in the midst of obloquy, in defending and adhering to true constitutional principles, which have of late been profaned and prostituted by his enemies, that the coalition with Lord North never could have his hearty approbation.

vent upon you idle and insulting reproaches, No, Sir—I have only the ardent, heart-felt wish to call you back to the exercise of your unbiassed judgment, and to restore lost confidence where alone it can be useful.

I trust it is not yet too late ; you may still occupy that high constitutional station, which others have deserted ; they have forfeited the confidence and esteem of the public, but you and your sincere friends have acted a consistent part, your characters are in this particular unimpeached ; by supporting ambitious, cruel, or immoral schemes, you have been misguided, and have grievously erred, it is true—but you may yet re-tread your steps with honour to yourselves and salvation to your country. You have been indeed deceived, it is the lot of humanity to err, but how noble, how dignified is it to retract our errors, and repair the unintended mischief by such magnanimity !

Expell from your mind the animosity, the rancour of party ; let the dæmon of faction be trampled under your feet, and let every other
nominal

nominal distinction be lost in that, of the *once* glorious appellation of *Briton*. Unite all the talents, all the worth of the country, and hasten to vindicate the political fame of Great Britain from this humiliating, this disgraceful imputation, That renowned as she is in arts, in science, and in arms, *one* man alone of all her progeny has talents and integrity sufficient to guide her councils.

Resume, ere the season of controul be passed, that enormous mass of influence and power which ought never by a free people to be committed even to an angel's keeping; that dangerous power which you have lavished with unbounded confidence, and without one atom of reservation, have deposited in the hands of a Minister*, the
lustre

* The youth of *this man*; the popularity of the cause which he first espoused; his name and illustrious descent; his ready elocution; and chiefly and lastly his *immense* patronage, have thrown a false, though dazzling splendour around him, which vanishes like a vapour, before the penetrating rays of truth.

The talents of Mr. P. have for these reasons been always over-rated. No one can deny that he has great abilities, but they are of a particular cast. They would have qualified him for a leading counsel; a pre-eminent lawyer. When a subject is
presented

lustre or the purity of whose actions have not yet
evinced the divinity of his origin—that sort of
power

presented to him, his conception of it is quick; his command of language is complete; he can represent or misrepresent with irresistible powers of eloquence. Whatsoever he wishes to strike most forcibly on the attention of his audience, he can irradiate with a blaze of light, and he can cast as deep a shade over that which he wishes to conceal. He can fascinate and manage the independent Members of the House with wonderful address. His daring spirit has instigated him to schemes which would have terrified the hardiest of his predecessors, and he can throw an air of plausibility, a fairness of oratorical colouring over his boldest measures, which under the fainter tints of their eloquence would have been rejected with disdain. With equal rapidity and cunning, he has turned the mistakes of his adversaries to his own advantage, and has dexterously combined his triumphs with their humiliation. But amidst all this sparkling tinsel of his mind, we shall search in vain for that deep reach of thought, those enlarged and comprehensive faculties; those elevated and noble ideas which constitute a great and enlightened statesman. For if his legislative powers, his mighty genius, are to be estimated at their sterling value, and according to the quantity of morality, happiness, and real prosperity which Great Britain has enjoyed under his administration, we shall find them miserably deficient. We must not take up as a test of solid national prosperity, that display of wealth, that glare of grandeur which the riches of the East, great commercial success, and the unparalleled extent of Patronage, has diffused over a comparatively small part of the nation; but our true estimate will be formed on the actual condition of the great body of the people.

power which, when once acquired, is never
voluntarily relinquished—that identical power
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people, consisting of gentry of moderate income, of the class next to these of still narrower mediocrity, and of the poorer but not the poorest classes. The sources whence this largest and best portion of society draws its vigour, its comforts, and its enjoyments, are cherished by the able and judicious statesman, with parental solicitude; they have been dreadfully impoverished or nearly dried up by Mr. Pitt. Even in the very bosom of peace, and in the midst of an overflowing prosperity, which with economy and a continuance of peace, would have soon recruited the exhausted powers of the country after the horrid American war, by a very trifling increase of the public burthens, his whole system of finance was harsh and oppressive. Under no administration but his have the modes of taxation ever trenched so cruelly upon private comfort and innocent enjoyment: Under no administration but his have the Excise laws been stretched so far, or that odious French measure the *farming* of taxes been adopted, or *retrospective taxation* ever practised.—This new engine of finance allows not a man the choice of proportioning his expenditure to his circumstances in those particular articles of taxation, which are thus seized upon not only without his consent, but against his *intention*.

After executing all his financial schemes to their utmost limit, is he really the *Great Financier* his sycophants have wished us to believe? Let any man resolve for himself this question, by beholding the state of the Treasury and of *Public Credit* at this moment.

If so ungenial and so barren were his political talents when all Europe experienced profound repose, and commercial enterprise

which it is your eminent duty as Senators to limit and to check, and by so limiting to prevent the bloodshed and civil warfare which have afflicted this realm, when our brave and high-spirited Ancestors were obliged to reclaim it at the point of the sword. Gracious God! has the constitution committed to you a trust so sacred? does the safety of the country hang upon the *religious* strictness with which you execute it at this tremendous crisis? and are you not roused to the performance of your duty at the hazard of your life, or seized with horror at the probability of betraying such a trust rendered
more

terprise and success had produced an abundance, which might have diffused joy and comfort over the meanest subjects of this kingdom; where or how could we hope to discover in him the wisdom, the moderation, the magnanimity which ought and which might have averted that tremendous storm, which, originating in France, has over-spread the civilized nations, and at this dread hour lowers over my unhappy country with an aspect of the deepest horror, and the most terrific threatening? If incapable of shielding a mighty nation, raised like this to a commanding height, from the approach of danger, how will he resist its immediate and awful pressure.

Wretched and devoted country! Has the Great Parent of the Universe, in punishing thy crimes, committed thy fate to such a man in such a crisis? May we be resigned, in confessing our guilt, to thy just but severe decrees!

more sacred than ever at this awful moment, when the fate of your country is suspended on a hair.

But I believe, it is still possible to avert a miserable fate by asserting your own independence, and feeling your own consequence; and by rejecting every motive of party, you may concentrate the wisdom of the country, revive the sinking powers of the constitution, restore the confidence and recover the attachment not of a particular class, but of the whole people. The native energy and vigour of the British nation will once more shine forth in all its splendour. You will obtain the power of proposing a fair and just peace, or of opposing French invaders with one heart, with one voice, and with an increase of force which is ever exerted when a people *feel* that they are fighting for *themselves*.

But above all, Sir, you will not be so much inclined to place your chief, if not your sole confidence in a standing army. You have a lesson sufficiently awful in the conduct of the French army (as gallant and as well disciplined as any in

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Europe),

Europe), when they became the sole reliance of the French Government: how extremely hazardous it is to repose on that only. That grand martial pillar, having been shattered in pieces, you will do well to behold in the excesses of the French Revolution, not the consequences of asserted freedom, but the deadly and horrible explosions of a vast mass of corrupt, fermenting materials, generated by ignorance and vice, and mixed with that atrocious cruelty, which despotism and superstition ever infuse into the human heart.

You need not doubt but that depravity and corruption of manners will produce the same effects in all countries, and that the only possible chance you have either to preserve the liberties of your own, or prevent the horrors of civil commotion, is a sincere, an immediate, and total change of your political conduct.

Reformation must begin with you, for while a system of corruption is not only avowed to exist, but permitted to increase under your auspices and sanctioned by your own practice,
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the morals of the people must continue to decline, and their oppressions to increase to a degree, which it is too shocking to contemplate, too painful even to conceive.

F I N I S.